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ABSTRACT

For schools to be effective, staff must have ongoing professional growth opportunities. The key to any successful professional growth program is preparation, involving several essential components to ensure that both teachers and administrators receive maximum benefit from the appraisal process. Research indicates that strong administrative leadership in the evaluation process is also helpful. This paper shows that combining a strong administrative leader with certain appraisal elements can build a more effective school system and that performance appraisal can be used to enhance professionalism. Adequate planning, especially regarding participatory goal-setting, is an essential element surpassed only by desire for improvement in importance. The belief that all teachers and administrators can become effective is necessary to keep administrator leadership from becoming merely an exercise in authority. Top-down commitment to improvement is also important, as districts control the time and money necessary to train administrators as evaluators. Oklahoma's progress in administrator training programs is briefly discussed. Teachers must also have time to confer with administrators to pinpoint weaknesses and work out corrective strategies. Finally, effective two-way communication that includes feedback and evaluation is a never-ending process that should lead to continued improvement as a goal for everyone. The chain of improved teaching will never end because there will always be one more link to strengthen. Included are six references. (MLH)

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APPRAISAL FOR PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT

A great deal of emphasis is currently being placed on "Effective " schooling. In order to have effective schools, it is necessary to have a program for continual professional growth for the staff members of the school system. The key to any successful professional growth program is preparation. Preparation entails several components which must be present for maximal potential to be realized for both the teacher and administrator involved in the appraisal process. Research indicates the importance of proper administrative leadership in schools deemed "Effective". Noted researcher Ron Edmonds feels that a strong instructional leader, who assumes responsibility for evaluation, makes a significant difference in the instructional process (Edmonds,1979). By combining a strong administrative leader with the following elements dealing with appraisal, a more effective school system can be built and performance appraisal can be used to enhance professionalism.

ADEQUATE PLANNING

To arrive at a desired level of performance, teachers and administrators must first know where they are going. Involvement of both teaching and administrative staffs in

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goal setting will help increase the acceptance of those goals by all concerned (Likert, 1961). After goals have been set, the appraisal instrument needs to be reviewed to make any needed alignments to parallel the goals. The appraisal instrument is an outcome of the planning and goal setting process, but, by no means is it the only priority. Other factors considered which should be included are: specific items to be observed, methods of observation, time and place of observation, length of observation, and assignment of a qualified observer/evaluator.

DESIRE FOR IMPROVEMENT

Paramount in the list of considered elements, is a true desire by both teaching and administrative staff to improve the status quo. The belief that all teachers and administrators can become more effective must be present. A good administrative leader can influence this idea tremendously. By having the trust and confidence of followers, an effective leader can help instill desires for professional improvement in a staff which might require a boost. Unfortunately, all too often, the appraisal process is used to allow an administrator an opportunity to exert "authority".

A more meaningful approach would be to liken a teacher to a chain made up of many skills called links. By strengthening one link at a time, the chain can be made stronger. The concept of a weak chain was never used, but a stronger chain is now present to take the place of the old

one. Also, note that the build up of the strength of the chain is accomplished by replacement of one chain link at a time. It is very easy to render even the strongest chain useless by involving too many links at one time. It is impossible for even the best blacksmith to remake all of the links of a chain at once.

COMMITTMENT BY THE DISTRICT FOR IMPROVEMENT

The emphasis for improvement must start from the top down. Time and money, the two big guns of the school district, must be used to effectively train administrators in the task of appraisal. The State Department of Education, local Boards of Education, and top administrative management leaders in a system, must be behind any plan for improvement. The state of Oklahoma is one of many states nationwide, which have shown a commitment to improvement in the area of performance appraisal by requiring all administrators who evaluate personnel to be certified by the state in personnel evaluatuion. Since personnel evaluation is based upon the concept of appraisal, it is evident better appraisal results are desired. In the final months of the 1986 school year, hundreds of Oklahoma administrators were trained in two-day workshops which covered techniques and areas of concern during evaluations. All administrators must be certified by the State Department of Education before they can do the mandatory evaluations required by state law. Also included in the training package for the

administrators, were the areas mandated to be included in evaluation instruments statewide.

Teachers must have time to confer with administrators to help pinpoint areas of weakness and methods of attack to combat those weaknesses. The district must commit the necessary time needed for those meetings. Time is money, as the saying goes. In order to maximize the return on investment, time spent in meetings should be as productive as possible. To work toward those ends, a commitment toward effective communication must be made by all parties concerned.

Once areas of weakness or concern are found, the district must continue the support cycle by funding necessary staff development programs. A commitment to a continual building process of the school staff must be made by the school district if maximum growth is to take place. The growth cycle is similar to the effectiveness cycle discussed by Hersey and Blanchard in their text dealing with management of organizational behavior (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982). High expectations, coupled with high performance, will lead to yet higher expectations, which in turn lead to higher performance--a building process which needs never to end. A high level effectiveness cycle based upon staff development needs is necessary for high levels of growth and improvement. The local board of education must commit whatever funds are necessary to allow for proper teacher and

administrator development. Teachers and administrators must work together to make an effective appraisal program.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

An adminsitrator simply filling out a form and shoving it into a teacher's mailbox after going through the routine evaluation process is ludicrous; yet, it is the way many administrators have handled their appraisal chores in the past. Improvement can only be made if the parties involved will approach the appraisal process with communication lines open and a desire to discuss ways to become stronger. The communication loop must include the key elements of: 1) Input -the observations by both the administrator and teacher from formal and informal situations, 2) Output -the plan to improve or strengthen the areas chosen, and, 3) A method to evaluate success or failure--another communication loop commonly referred to as feedback. Key elements of any communication flowchart are the concepts of feedback and evaluation. Feedback is a never ending process that should lead to continual improvement. Improvement can only be noted if a goal or standard can be compared to actual performance throughout the evaluation process. The goals referenced are those decided upon by both administrative and teaching representatives. As discussed earlier, by having both concerned factions help set goals and devise an appraisal/ evaluation instrument, there is a greater chance for improvement (Likert, 1967). Research by Edmonds also supports Likert's findings about performance levels

remaining high when involvement by teachers is an integral part of goal setting and staff development (Edmonds, 1982).

CONTINUAL APPRAISAL

Appraisal is likened to the communication loop. It is a never ending, continual process for improvement. All too often, performance appraisal occurs only the mandatory 'once per year', or less, depending on location and tenure status of the teacher, time considerations of the administrators involved, or any other of the myriad of excuses used to partially do an effective job of evaluation. Evaluation is the end product of teacher appraisal. Final evaluation each evaluative period should entail as many performance appraisals as possible. The days of the administrators who feel they can effectively evaluate a teacher by walking down the hall and peering through a window are numbered. The public expects teachers and administrators to do the job for which they were hired-- teach our youth to survive in a changing society. In order to accomplish this task, teachers and administrators must learn to change emphasis as society changes its emphasis. No longer will the public stand by and allow mediocrity to pervade our systems due to incompetent administrators and teachers. Continual improvement is a goal for all. It is not enough to simply know who our "good" teachers are; we must work for improvement for all of our staff members- both "good" and "poor". Our chain of teaching can be further tempered and made stronger by linking the ends together. By such a

process, the chain of improved teaching will never end. There will always be one more link to strengthen. As educators, there will always be one more method to try to improve our technique or skill. Forging the strength of our chain with the fires of appropriate emphasis on staff development will allow us to build a chain capable of handling any size job put before us. Success breeds success, strength breeds strength, and effective teaching in a school system will lead to higher levels of effective teaching. A never-ending cycle of emphasizing excellence in education and providing the necessary training as evidenced by commitment of the school system's time and money will allow for improvement in our educational process.

CONCLUSION

Excellence in education is the goal desired by most teachers and administrators. Hopefully, those people who are in education for only the money or job security- the superficial reasons the poor teachers and administrators present stay involved- will take the hint that improvements will be expected. Nothing less than excellence will be tolerated. By properly using appraisal for professional improvement, we will once again have our members attain the status once held by the revered teaching members of years gone by. We can once again be looked up to as SCHOLARS. Planning, true desire for improvement, strong commitment for improvement toward excellence by school districts, proper

utilization of communication and feedback, and continual appraisal can help make us once again attain strength in our educational endeavors.

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